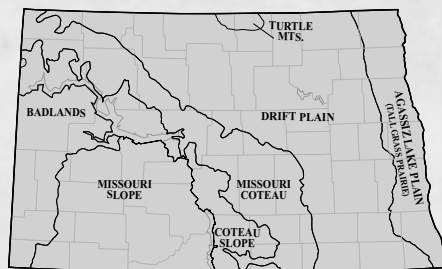


## Wolf, Prairie Wolf, Large Red Fox, and Prairie or Swift Fox (Wolves, Coyotes, Red Fox, and Swift Fox)



The fates and fortunes of the wild dogs were as much affected by each other as man. They have a stern pecking order—wolves kill coyotes, coyotes kill red fox, and red fox kill swift fox. In 1800 wolves were abundant on the northern Great Plains and seemed to accompany each herd of bison. Lewis and Clark, as well as other early travelers, often treated wolves and coyotes interchangeably in their notes. As a result it is difficult to decipher which species they are referring to at times.

Fur trade for wolves and other animals dramatically increased in the 1820s and 1830s. Wolves remained common, however, through the 1850s. By 1875 wolf numbers had declined dramatically and were reportedly rare east of the Little Missouri River. By 1890 only scattered reports are noted in journals and reports. Today individual wolves still occasionally drift into the state, but established packs are not found in North Dakota.

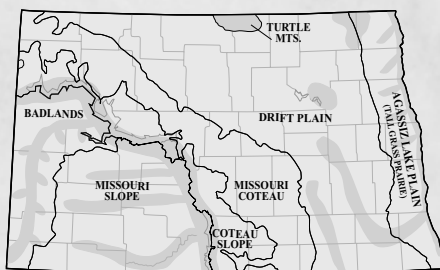
Coyotes were found throughout the state. With the demise of the wolf, coyotes were reported abundant in the Little Missouri badlands and com-

mon over much of the state between 1910 and 1920. Coyotes persisted in North Dakota despite more than \$1.1 million paid out in bounties for wolves and coyotes between 1898 and 1943, and another \$1.1 million spent between 1944 and 1961 on bounties for coyotes and red fox.

Historically, red fox were found throughout the state, but at relatively lower numbers than wolves and coyotes. Between 1801 and 1808 Alexander Henry, a fur trader in the northeastern corner of the state collected 2,842 wolf and coyote pelts, and only 1,132 red fox pelts. By the late 1870s, coyotes had declined and red fox became very common in the eastern third of the state. The introduction of a bounty system on coyotes in 1898 resulted in a dramatic increase in fox numbers. Between 1943 and 1959 the number of red fox bountied increased twenty-fold. The bounty system was eliminated in 1961. Today both coyotes and red fox are common throughout the state with numbers fluctuating primarily in response to outbreaks of mange and other diseases.

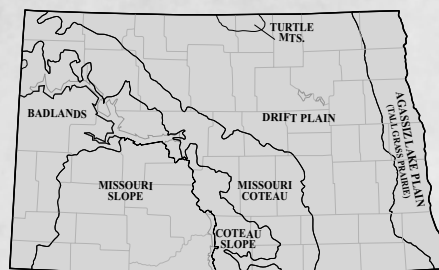
Historically, the little swift fox (size of a house cat) was found throughout all of North Dakota, but appeared to be very common only in the western third of the state. Swift fox numbers decreased as red fox numbers increased, and became scarce in much of the state by the late 1870s and 1880s. By 1920 they were thought to have been extirpated. In 1970 an animal was found dead in Slope County. None have been reported recently in North Dakota.

## Beaver (Beaver)



In 1738 La Verendrye, the first European known to visit North Dakota, walked down from Manitoba to establish trade relations with the Mandan and scout the area for beaver. These highly sought animals were abundant throughout the northern Great Plains anywhere that wooded stream banks provided food and cover. Between 1801 and 1808 nearly 13,000 beaver were harvested from the area surrounding the Pembina Post of the North West Fur Trading Company.

In just 16 short years (1792-1808) beaver populations surrounding the Pembina post became so depleted that it was closed. Lewis and Clark found beaver abundant along the Missouri River, particularly above the mouth of the Little Missouri River. Fur traders quickly followed Lewis and Clark up the Missouri River in search of the wealth beaver could provide. By the late 1820s and early 1830s



the beaver trade had reached its peak in North Dakota. As many as 25,000 beaver were brought into Fort Union, near present-day Williston, in 1833.

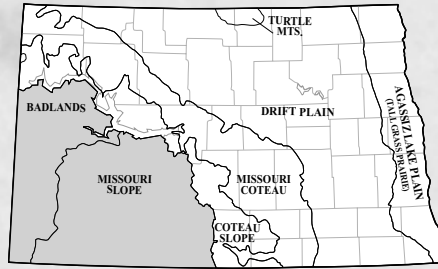
It is striking how quickly the beaver fur trade, the driving force that opened the West, had passed. By 1839, no beaver were traded at Fort Clark, near present-day Washburn, and only scattered populations remained in the state. Beaver remained scarce until after 1900. Between 1910 and 1920 beaver colonies started to reappear on the Missouri River and its major tributaries and numbers continued to build during the 1930s and 1940s. During the early 1950s the number of beaver harvested dramatically increased. Today beaver are once again found in most of the streams and river systems capable of supporting a colony.

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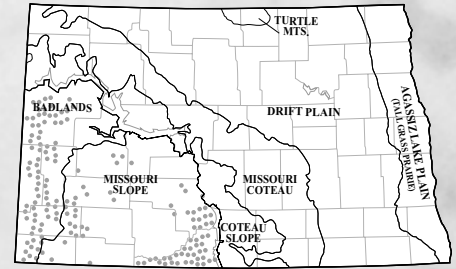
## Barking Squirrels and a Ghost (Black-tailed Prairie Dogs and Black-footed Ferrets)



Harold Unbeard



Lewis and Clark were captivated by prairie dogs and made frequent notes in their journals about these curious animals. In fact, they sent a cage with a live prairie dog back to President Jefferson from Fort Mandan. Prairie dog towns dotted the prairies of North Dakota south and west of the Missouri River. These towns ranged in size from several hundred to several thousand acres. Prairie dogs remained abundant until settlement of south-western North Dakota in the 1880s and 1890s. Poisoning rapidly eliminated many of the towns and by 1920 few prairie dog towns remained in the state. It is estimated that prairie dogs now occupy about one percent of their former range. Today, black-tailed prairie dogs can be easily viewed at Theodore Roosevelt National Park, in



scattered dog towns on the Little Missouri National Grasslands, Sioux County, and the Dakota Zoo in Bismarck.

Although held in high esteem by Indian tribes of the northern Great Plains, Lewis and Clark apparently never saw or recognized black-footed ferrets during their expedition. This animal remained a secret to the scientific community until 1851. The lives of black-footed ferrets are so dependent upon prairie dogs (more than 85 percent of their diet), that their fate was sealed once the poisoning of dog towns was underway. Unverified sightings continue to be reported in the state, but for all practical purposes they are a ghost of North Dakota's past. Captive black-footed ferrets may be viewed at the Dakota Zoo.

## Panther, Louservia, & Tiger Cat (Mountain Lion, Canada Lynx & Bobcat)

Compared to wild dogs, wild cats were a rarity on the northern Great Plains. Although familiar with these animals back in the United States, no members of Lewis and Clark's expedition reported seeing wild cats while in North Dakota. Historically, mountain lions were rare east of the Missouri and uncommon in the badlands. Lynx probably were found in the Turtle Mountains and Pembina Hills prior to 1875. Today lions and

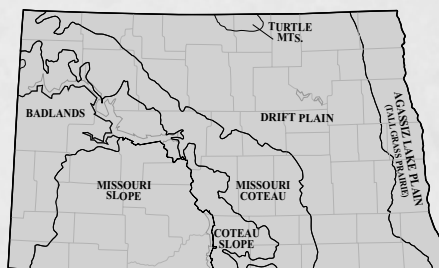
lynx are sighted rarely in the state. Bobcats were reported historically throughout the state at low numbers, with the most frequent reports from the badlands. Bobcat numbers declined after settlement of the badlands in the 1880s. Today, with regulated hunting and trapping, bobcats have made a modest comeback with most of the animals taken in the badlands and along the Missouri River.

## Birds

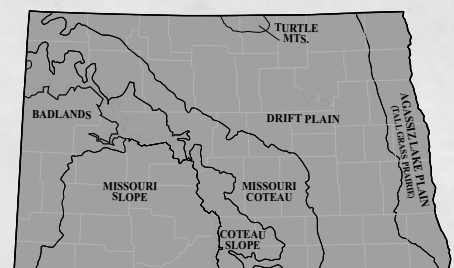
### Old Field Lark (Western Meadowlark)



Craig Bihle

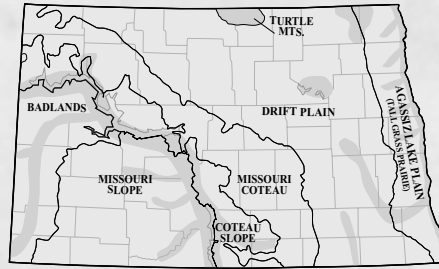


Lewis and Clark recognized the slight differences between our western meadowlark, and the eastern form known to them as the field lark. As appropriate for our state bird, the meadowlark is found throughout North Dakota.

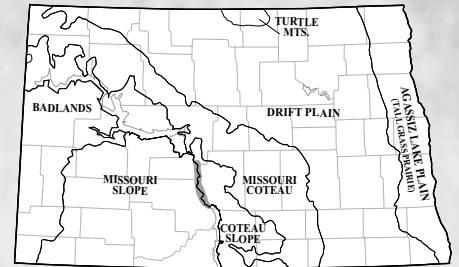


## Bald Eagle

Harold Umber



Lewis and Clark reported the bald eagle as common along the Missouri River upstream from Fort Mandan, and particularly abundant on that portion of the river above the mouth of the Little Missouri River and near the mouth of the Yellowstone River. Bald eagles primarily depend on fish as a food source. Historically, eagles were reported along the Red River and other major river systems, as well as along wooded shorelines of large lakes such as Devils Lake, Stump Lake,



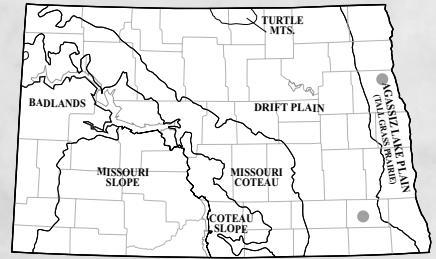
and in the Turtle Mountains. Eagle numbers declined dramatically in the late 1940s through the early 1960s with the pervasive use of pesticides such as DDT. With the banning of DDT, bald eagles have shown a slow but steady comeback. Today bald eagle sightings are most common along the Missouri River, particularly that portion of the river between Bismarck-Mandan and Garrison Dam.

## Prairie Fowls (Prairie Chickens)

Ed Bry



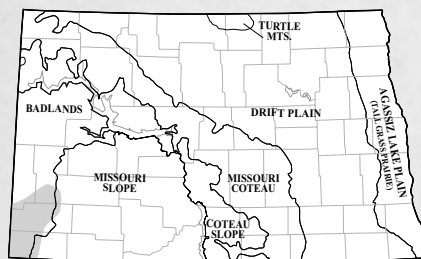
Prairie chickens remained rare in the state until the early 1880s when they began to move north and west as the prairie was broken for grain farming. By 1900 this bird was found throughout the state, excluding the badlands. Prairie chicken fortunes began to reverse in the 1930s. In 1940 prairie



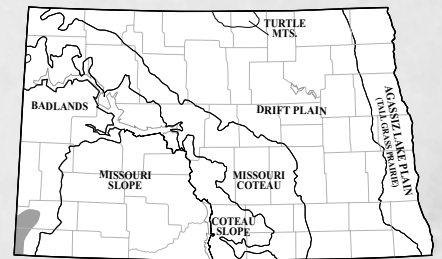
chicken numbers were estimated to be 430,000, but by 1964 it was estimated that less than 5,000 birds remained in the state. Today prairie chickens number less than 1,000 birds. Resident populations are found on the Sheyenne National Grasslands and Prairie Chicken WMA (Grand Forks County).

## Cock of the Plains (Sage Grouse)

Ed Bry



Although not seen by Lewis and Clark in North Dakota, sage grouse were locally common in the central and southern portions of the Little Missouri National Grasslands. This species is restricted to scrub prairie dominated by black sage. As sage

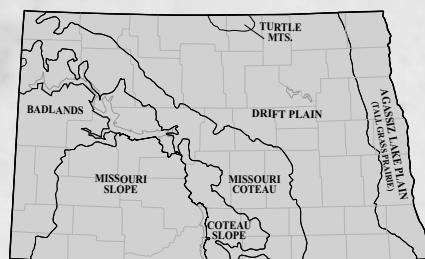
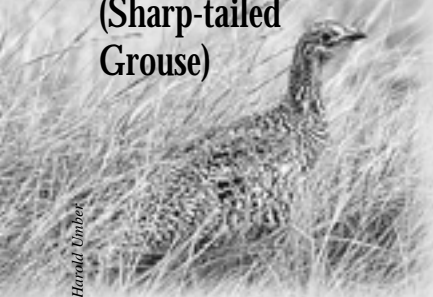


grouse habitat was converted to farmland, and black sage brush reduced, North Dakota's sage grouse population declined. Sage grouse are now found only in extreme southwestern North Dakota, particularly western Bowman and Slope counties.

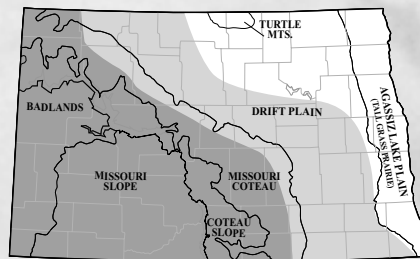


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## Pointed Tail Prairie Hen (Sharp-tailed Grouse)

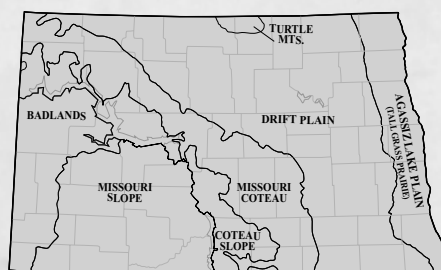


Sharp-tailed grouse were reported in great numbers by Lewis and Clark during their stay in North Dakota. In fact, a live specimen was sent back to the United States from Fort Mandan in 1804. This species was found throughout the



state, particularly in the mixed-grass prairie. As farming and grazing practices became more intense, grouse populations receded. Sharp-tailed grouse are common in North Dakota, particularly in the Little Missouri National Grasslands.

## Common or Canadian Goose (Canada Goose)



Because they were common back east little reference was made to the Canada goose other than they were abundant and some displayed the unusual behavior of nesting in trees along the Missouri River. The giant Canada goose was found throughout the state, and remained common into the 1880s. By the 1920s they were considered rare breeders in the state with only a few nesting in Ramsey and Kidder counties. In 1938 the U.S.



Fish and Wildlife Service, and later the North Dakota Game and Fish Department began reintroducing birds to the state. Later, work shifted to transplanting geese to other public and private lands. This reintroduction is now considered a textbook example of a wildlife management success story. Today giant Canada geese again nest throughout the state.

# Fish

The major fish species originally found in the Missouri River were those that depended upon scent and touch to find their food. While coming upriver Lewis and Clark frequently referred to catching catfish, goldeye, suckers, and sauger. Although not mentioned in their journals, shovelnose sturgeon, pallid sturgeon, and paddlefish were undoubtedly common. Northern pike were probably abundant in the larger river systems and permanent lakes around the state. Between the 1930s and 1960s, six large dams were constructed on the Missouri River for the purpose of flood control. Clear water and deep reservoirs allowed a new assemblage of sight-feeding fish to thrive in the river system. Today native walleye, and introduced species such as Chinook salmon, trout, and bass are popular game fish in the Missouri River System.

## Northern Pike

Historically, pike were found in all major river systems and large permanent lakes throughout the state. Due to record high water and their adaptability to small reservoirs, we are currently enjoying a wealth of fishing opportunities with this species.

## Paddlefish and Pallid Sturgeon

Once found throughout the murky waters of the free-flowing Missouri River, the distribution of these primeval fish in North Dakota is now generally confined to that portion of the Missouri River upstream from Lake Sakakawea, and the Yellowstone River. Paddlefish fishing is heavily restricted, and the pallid sturgeon is now federally listed as an endangered species.

## Hickory Shad (Sauger and Walleye)

The sauger was frequently fished by members of Lewis and Clark's party as they passed through North Dakota. Walleye were probably present too, but at lower numbers. With the construction of mainstem reservoirs, walleye became increasingly abundant. Today Lake Oahe and Lake Sakakawea are nationally known as premier walleye fisheries.

## Channel Catfish

Channel catfish historically were found in large river systems throughout the state, and are still found in good numbers. Although currently passed up by most anglers, this is an excellent food fish with commercial importance in other parts of the country.